

110 Cultural Relations in the Plateau of Northwestern America

THE SECRET SOCIETY

535 We have seen that among the Klallam the potlatch may be combined
 575 with either spirit singing or secret society rituals, and to either combina-
 776 tion the same name is applied. Again, among the Quinault the secret
 796 society rituals are sometimes associated with the potlatch.⁸³ But the
 Lower Chinook society is cast in the mold of the spirit dance and well
 integrated with the spirit concept.

Eligibility to membership depended upon two factors, upper class status and the possession of a "secret society guardian spirit." The latter phrasing merely implied spirit instruction to join the society plus the conveyance of the necessary type of power. Such power was obtained in exactly the same fashion as any other. It consisted of the ability to inflict self-torture, followed by miraculous recovery. . . . The externals of [the initiation of the novice] were identical with the guardian spirit initiation.⁸⁴

These parallels, as well as the absence of the society-potlatch combination, are undoubtedly due to indirect influences from the Plateau. The nature of the Lower Chinook Spirit Dance and much of the guardian spirit complex points to the interior. The Plateau has thus indirectly affected the local form of a typically Northwest Coast institution entirely unknown to it. Even as far northward as the Quinault, the "society" is considered a special kind of spirit, obtainable in the same fashion as any other, but it is not stated that possession of this spirit is essential to membership.⁸⁴

THE SPIRIT SINGING OF PUGET SOUND

431 On Puget Sound spirit singing is frequent during the winter season,
 535 but available data are insufficient to establish the exact nature of the
 776 ceremony, or the structural relationship with the Spirit Dance of the
 796 Plateau. The actual spirit singing and dancing follow the Plateau pattern, but whether such activities are ever entirely divorced from the potlatch is uncertain. The latter is fairly well developed in typical form. According to Haeberlin

The potlatch was a great feast given primarily for the distribution of gifts to the guests. Each person receiving gifts at such an occasion was under obligation to his host to invite him to his next potlatch and to give him an adequate gift in return. . . . If a man received one blanket, at his own potlatch he re-

⁸³ Olson, *Quinault Indians*, p. 121.

⁸⁴ Ray, *Lower Chinook*, pp. 89 f.

⁸⁵ Olson, *Quinault Indians*, pp. 120 f.